



St. Matthew Catholic
Church Pastoral Plan
2016 – 2018

Connected in Christ! Moved by the Spirit!

Approved:

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Date



I. Pastoral Plan Introduction

The St. Matthew Pastoral Plan was created after considering the results of the 2014 ME²⁵ Engagement Survey and the 2015 CARA Survey. It starts in January 2016 with and ends in June 2018. The new plan builds on previous pastoral plans and key elements of the fabric of our parish.

- The Eucharist, the real presence of Jesus Christ, is at the heart of our Catholic identity;
- Those that are engaged, have greater life satisfaction and spirituality;
- Knowledge of our God-given talents brings comfort and helps us find our way;
- We are called to live in community, be welcoming and invite individuals to Christ;
- Our growing, diverse parish family is blessed, there is much good news to share and;
- We believe in peace, service and social justice.

The pastoral plan is inspired by the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy called for by Pope Francis on April 11, 2015. The primary objective of the 2016-2018 plan is stated as follows.

Blessed by God’s Divine mercy and inspired by the gift of His Son, Catholic Christians are invited to a new life of mercy through greater participation in the joy of the Eucharist, a commitment to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and an increase in both corporal and spiritual works.

The pastoral plan includes a revision to St. Matthew’s mission statement and ten strategies that will guide parish activities according to the year themes. The themes for each of the plan are inspired by the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Year 1 is about invitation, an invitation to God’s Mercy. It includes an extraordinary display of mercy in our community in 2016. Year 2 encourages all to a greater life of unending kindness. The plan for Year 3 is to open the Doors of the St. Matthew Mercy Center on St. Matthew’s main campus.

The plan includes ten different strategies, each intended to increase engagement, encourage a life of mercy and aid all on their faith journey.

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| 1. Celebrate God’s Mercy | — 6. Emphasize the Importance of the family |
| 2. Extend Corporal & Spiritual Acts of Mercy as Witness to God’s Mercy | — 7. Engage ‘the future of the world... the hope of the Church’ |
| ✓ 3. Embrace the Church’s Social Teaching | — 8. Formation on Catholic Teachings |
| 4. The Theology of Stewardship | — 9. Building Community |
| 5. Energize Lay Leaders as Witnesses of Mercy | 10. Open the St. Matthew Mercy Center |

The remainder of this document includes a brief history of St. Matthew and describes the strategies in greater detail.



II. St. Matthew Church Overview

St. Matthew Catholic Church was established on the feast of St. Matthew, Patron Saint of banking, September 21, 1986. Under the guidance of Monsignor Joseph Kerin, 600 Catholics celebrated the two Masses on November 2, 1986, at the Tower Place Cinema, to officially launch what is now the largest Catholic parish in the United States. This young parish would expand through the dreams, vision and energy of the faithful that had gathered in Charlotte. As people came from various parts of the country, they sought spiritual, educational and social opportunities for them and their families. They found all of it at St. Matthew.

In 1987 the first Parish census was taken and there were 237 registered households. Through their prayers, their faith and the growth of the parish, the Parish Center was opened on July 22, 1989. This was a dream come true for those members. The Parish Center included a gym, which had 750 stacking chairs to accommodate all who came for weekend Mass, parish offices and a Daily Mass Chapel. The Parish Center became home to Formation classes, athletic events, scouting events, dances and other parish activities.

The Parish has continued to grow. On March 17, 1996 the 33,000 square foot sanctuary was dedicated by then Bishop William G. Curlin. The Holy Spirit, together with the clergy, the religious and dedicated laity of the parish, the Living Stones, had resurrected its new home, for the 2,109 registered households.

Three years later, on July 7, 1999 Bishop Curlin appointed the third Pastor of St. Matthew, The Reverend Monsignor John J. McSweeney, succeeding Father Edmund Walker who had been there for the past 3 years. With Monsignor McSweeney's vision for continued growth, a plan was developed and implemented. In 2003, what is now St. Matthew, came to life. A new Daily Mass Chapel, with a warehouse below, that houses the food pantry and donated goods, was opened along with the Ministry Building (New Life Center), An Education Building (St. Matthew Catholic School), a Columbarium and an expanded parking area. In 2015, the St. Matthew South Campus in Waxhaw was opened. Faith formation and liturgies are held at this campus weekly and the site plan includes plans for a school and sanctuary.

Those original 237 members have now become over 10,000 households and over 32,000 members, becoming the largest faith community in the Carolinas and one of the largest Catholic Churches in North America. St. Matthew has over 100 ministries established to meet the spiritual, personal, and communal needs of the Parishioners and community. St. Matthew continues to be responsive to the changing spiritual and social needs of our parishioners. St. Matthew's has been blessed through all the gifts that the parishioners bring to our community.



III. Spiritual Direction - The Jubilee Year of Mercy

The plan is inspired by the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy called for by Pope Francis on April 11, 2015. The motto of the Jubilee Year of Mercy is 'Merciful like the Father'. Pope Francis encourages us to focus on mercy as the face of Christ rather than an abstract word.

"Here, then, is the reason for the Jubilee: because this is a time for mercy. It is a favorable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone the way to forgiveness and reconciliation." Pope Francis, April 11, 2015

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The pastoral plan describes strategies that are intended to increase the spirituality of all members and to building the Kingdom of God - - living out our baptismal calling where we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God, becoming members of Christ's Church and incorporated into its mission.

IV. Revised Mission Statement

The parish vision statement and mission statement were adopted as part of the St. Matthew Pastoral Plan in 2008-2011. The vision statement provides a concise statement that is easily remembered by all parishioners and helps 'brand's our parish to the community at large. It reflects that our parish community is interconnected to each other through our savior Jesus Christ and denotes the importance of the Holy Spirit which is represented in the stained glass window situated above the Corpus on the altar in the sanctuary.

Vision Statement

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The parish mission statement reflects our desire to be an engaged and spiritually committed parish on our faith journey and highlights our belief in the Gospel, service and outreach.



Mission Statement

The Eucharistic Catholic community of St. Matthew loves Christ above all things and our neighbors as ourselves. In our faith journey, our parish family will be engaged and spiritually committed; fulfilling our vision through shared Gospel values, prayer, fellowship, service, outreach and teaching.

A new mission statement for St. Matthew reflects the Jubilee Year of Mercy and the need for mercy in our world as Pope Francis has suggested. *'In this era of profound changes, the Church is called to offer her particular contribution, rendering visible the signs of the presence and closeness of God. The Jubilee is a favorable time for all of us, because by contemplating Divine Mercy, which overcomes all human limitations and shines in the darkness of sin, we are able to become more certain and effective witnesses.'* Pope Francis, December 9, 2015

New St. Matthew Mission Statement

The Catholic community of St. Matthew seeks Salvation through Jesus Christ. We are transformed through prayer, acts of love, forgiveness, service and stewardship. We invite and welcome all to receive God's love and mercy.

The Pastor and lay leadership believe the new mission can help renew and energize St. Matthew, ushering in a new era of service, engagement, welcoming and Spirituality, much like Pope Francis has done through his papacy.

V. Strategies to 'Open the Doors to Christ'

One of the primary signs of the Jubilee year is the opening of the Holy Doors located in Rome at the Vatican. The Holy Doors become Doors of Mercy "through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope", declared Pope Francis. The following ten strategies are intended to provide a blueprint for the Pastor, staff and lay leaders to *'Open the Doors to St. Matthew'* and invite all to a deeper level of spirituality by living and sharing God's mercy. Specific priorities, action plans, projects and accountabilities will be defined as the plan is implemented.

1. Celebrate God's Mercy

Following the parish mission and Lenten program, implement specific programs focused on communal penance, Cenacles, reconciliation and small groups – organized or affinity groups. Adjust programs to the needs of different demographic groups and identify programs to emphasize (e.g., CRHP, Consecration, Cenacles). Include emphasis on corporal and Spiritual acts of Mercy providing opportunities for both education and participation.

2. Extend Corporal & Spiritual Acts of Mercy as Witness to God's Mercy

To celebrate the Jubilee Year of Mercy, St. Matthew will make a significant and visible sign of mercy in 2016 over and above the works performed regularly through ministries and outreach. This significant act(s) of mercy should be an act of charity that represents an outpouring of faith and love as witness to the community. This act of mercy should be bold, purposeful, and thoughtful while serving the needs on a local, national and/or international basis. Following this activity, consider how current ministries can be expanded to involve more parishioners and be witness to God's mercy.

The following ideas are submitted for consideration as a significant sign of mercy in 2016:



- 1) Purchasing land to operate/fund an indigent cemetery;
- 2) Funding an orphanage in Charlotte;
- 3) Fund an affordable nursing home for the elderly;
- 4) Partner with Levine Children's Hospital to provide support for abused children
- 5) Partner with Levine Children's Hospital to provide homes for foster children;
- 6) Create a dog park;
- 7) Create an athletic facility that provides a safe location for youth, faith and fitness;
- 8) Create an exceptional needs children program;
- 9) Create a foundation for ongoing social needs or mental health;
- 10) Create a memorial to those who demonstrate service/acts of mercy;
- 11) Create a park/spiritual oasis;
- 12) Fund equipment for CMS/Union County schools;
- 13) Support public and Catholic school teachers by supplementing salaries, providing bonuses or establishing supply funds
- 14) Purchase transportation vehicles for the elderly and those with disabilities;
- 15) Provide bullet proof vests and cameras for all police officers;
- 16) Create a garden at a hospitals providing a peaceful place families and doctors;
- 17) Help expand the Levine Cancer Center;
- 18) Purchase a large piece of equipment that a hospital needs;
- 19) Create a St. Matthew Scholarship at Charlotte colleges;
- 20) Fund attendance at MACS schools;
- 21) Increase activity to reduce homelessness;
- 22) Fund school lunch programs;
- 23) Build a group/assisted living home for those with disabilities;
- 24) Sponsor refugee families;
- 25) Provide an ambulance to a village in Ethiopia or;
- 26) Build a well in a village in Haiti.

3. Embrace the Church's Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching is a central element of our faith. It is based on and our belief that every human being is uniquely created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ and therefore worthy of respect as a member of the human family. Catholic social teaching includes the following.

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person - The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.
- Care for God's Creation - We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation.
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation - The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society -- in economics and politics, in law and policy -- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all.
- Rights and Responsibilities - The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met.



- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable - A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring.
- The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers - The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation.
- Solidarity - We are one human family regardless of national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence, racial injustice, economic disparity and conflict.

Consider naming a staff person responsible for Catholic Social Teaching and expanding activities that highlight all of these teaching. Integrate them more fully into educational activities, particularly in elementary and high school faith formation, and regular communications to all parishioners. Continue to fund and support the counseling center.

4. The Theology of Stewardship

God calls each of us to receive His gifts gratefully and to share His gifts – our time, talent, and treasure – generously. We are called to be good stewards of God's gifts and to be accountable to Him with all that He has entrusted to us. St. Matthew parish is blessed and fortunate, the beneficiaries of God's goodness and generosity. We are committed to being a good steward and share our treasure to serve the needs of the parish community, as well as serving other needs locally, nationally and internationally.

Continue efforts to help St. Matthew parishioners understand God's expectations of us individually to be good stewards of His many blessings, enabling the parish to do even more to serve the needs in our community and beyond. Consider all collections, promotions and asks including the timings, frequency and messages for each. Ensure there is alignment with these activities with the overall mission and vision of the parish. Recommend actions to teach the importance of stewardship; communicate the overall stewardship and collections plan and; adjust the approach to collections and parish tithing.

5. Energize Lay Leaders as Witnesses of Mercy

St. Matthew operates a diverse collection of ministries, led by committed staff and lay leaders, which serve the needs of the community. The ministries provide parishioners and those being served with an opportunity for Service, Spiritual growth and Social interaction. Ministry leaders have a unique opportunity to witness, evangelize and 'Open the Doors', however they also need to be renewed through regular events like retreats, leader development opportunities, pilgrimages and recognition events. Recommended actions include development of an annual ministry leader enrichment plan; co-lead lay and staff ownership of ministry leader enrichment and; identification of future ministry leaders; ministry leader training and; ministry leaders succession planning.

6. Emphasize the Importance of the Family

With over 30,000 parishioners and over 10,000 households, St. Matthew is a diverse family. It includes married couples, single parent homes, singles, empty nesters, grandparents, those retired, those in assisted living centers, those with exceptional needs and those away at school/in the service. The family is the first place we learn morality and our faith. It is the first community with parents, siblings and spouses where we learn to relate to and care for others. Pope Francis describes the family as the



primary teacher of mercy, forgiveness, love, faith, and communication -- important for the evangelization of the new world and necessary for the survival of humanity.

It is vital that St. Matthew continue to offer family-centric activities for all families and encourage families on their faith journeys. Activities and church programs need to consider the influence of social media, non-church related activities, technology and socio-economic factors. New programs for inter-generational relationships, cultural sharing, career development, vocation education and family centric service should be emphasized.

7. *Engage 'the future of the world... the hope of the Church'*

St. John Paul II to youth during his Installation Ceremony, 1978

St. John Paul highlighted that the youth and young adults are the future of the world and the hope of the Church. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, identified young people as precious gifts and Pope Francis noted that '...the Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity...' at World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, 2013. St. Matthew has a large, community of youth and young adults that are active in the liturgy, service and social efforts. Continued efforts are required to engage these groups, leading with invitation, welcoming, service and connectedness and building to a Eucharistic commitment and Catholic teachings.

Consider opportunities for small single-gender groups for fellowship and sharing; investment in youth/young adult staff leaders; service projects tailored to youth and young adults; environmental activities that youth and young adults are interested in; emphasize/require strength's ministries for Confirmation; work with the Diocese to adjust the timing of Confirmation to later in high school (e.g., 11th grade); career education sessions; career mentoring; connecting seniors with youth and young adults; social/sporting events; alternative uses of technology (e.g., social media, apps) to stay engaged; a physical location to spend time in fellowship and; programs to stay connected with St. Matthew college students or service personnel that are away from home.

8. *Formation on Catholic Teachings*

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Mt 28:19-20)

The US Catholic Council of Bishops reminds us that the teaching mission of the Church comes from Christ himself. The responsibility for fulfilling that mandate passes on unchanged to the bishops and to all Catholics. It is lifelong journey to witnesses to Christ and opening their hearts to the spiritual transformation of the Holy Spirit.

St. Matthew teaches thousands of parishioners through faith formation, adult education programs, community-wide programs, missions, bible studies and more. Additionally, St. Matthew grade school is an integral part of our community while St. Matthew parishioners make up a significant portion of the student population in MACS.

The importance of formation suggest a need to review the relationship between St Matthew and MACS; the financial commitment to the Diocese for MACS; the number of parish children that attend MACS;



the affordability of MACS; overall faith formation spend and; needs of all parishioners (children and adults). Identification of suggestions to: make Catholic schools more affordable; adjusting Faith Formation offerings; expand the opportunities for exceptional students in MACS and in St. Matthew faith formation; faith formation delivery channels (e.g., online offerings) are expected.

Parishioners place a high priority on building a school at the South Campus. St. Matthew should work with MACS to accomplish this within the next 3-5 years. The benefits of a grade school at the South Campus are many, including: job creation, more opportunities/seats for Catholic Education, increased facilities for Faith Formation and reduced travel time for families.

9. *Building Community*

The diversity, size, scale, means and location of St. Matthew present an opportunity and a responsibility to be a significant, positive, influential light in the community. Parish leaders are encouraged to find ways to bring us together as a community at scale (e.g., parish-wide Mass, Food Drive, life chain, annual church picnic), in visible ways, to create a sense of belonging for all parishioners and intrigue among Catholics and non-Catholics alike. There are also opportunities to create inter-generational connections that provide a sense of belonging, create mentoring relationships and record the history of our community. Furthermore, events that highlight the cultural diversity of our community should be regular occurrences and reinforce our relationship with Catholics worldwide.

Continued emphasis on welcoming and invitation is essential to a sense of belonging and community. Regular review and refresh of welcoming programs, materials, processes and responsibilities is required to adjust to the changing needs of parishioners. 'Planting' new parishioners in at least one thing and/or connecting new parishioners with current parishioners should be a goal.

St. Matthew's sense of community can be further enhanced by continued evolution of our communications and 'sharing the good news'. This might include naming a staff communications director responsible for all channels, creation of periodical, refreshing the website and modernizing the pictures on campus to tell our faith story.

10. *Open the St. Matthew Main Campus Mercy Center*

Jesus taught us that charity is essential; however, He also understood that signs and symbols are meaningful to our souls as illustrated by the Mass that incorporates all of our senses to help us experience the Lord. Assuming the community of St. Matthew is able to demonstrate acts of mercy and take care of the material and physical needs of our community, parish leaders should consider an expansion of the main campus and opening the doors of *the St. Matthew Mercy Center*.

The Mercy Center will be more than a building – it can be physical example to the community, of a holy place, with broad appeal for ecumenical outreach, community building and service. This multi-purpose facility can include a chapel and various rooms/facilities. It can be an example of environmental stewardship, with technology innovations and an interesting décor that provides a gathering place for youth and young adults. Funding for and timing for the facility will need to be aligned with the overall plans for the main campus.



VI. Implementing the Pastoral Plan

The implementation of the pastoral plan will be directed by Monsignor and the Pastoral Council and include the following.

- Identifying or hiring a staff member who will be responsible for implementing the plan
- Prioritizing activities associated with each strategy
- Defining action plans and/or activities to develop recommendations for each strategy
- Aligning church staff, lay leaders and processes to each strategy
- Communicating the ME²⁵ and CARA survey results and pastoral plan

A high level yearly roadmap that defines pastoral plan journey begins with the parish mission in January 2016 conducted by the Dominicans and culminates with the 'opening the doors' and blessing the St. Matthew Mercy Center in 2018.

Year 1 Invitation to God's Mercy	Year 2 Living a Life of Mercy	Year 3 Open The Doors of Mercy
<p>Year one of the plan begins with the parish mission in January 2016, conducted by the Dominicans. It will be followed by a small group program, <i>The Face of Mercy</i>, and Lent, providing all parishioners an opportunity for conversion and a chance to learn more about God's mercy.</p> <p>The year continues with a bold, significant, visible statement of mercy to the community; identification of corporal and spiritual acts of mercy to expand; more frequent communal penance services and; an increased emphasis on Cenacles of Divine Mercy.</p> <p>Actions plans are defined to enhance communications capabilities; embrace Catholic social teaching; engage youth/young adults and; energize lay leaders.</p>	<p>Mercy continues be a theme in year two of the plan building on year one.</p> <p>A review of stewardship, tithing and collections results in suggestions to adjust programs and activities. Faith formation, MACS participation and the needs for a school at the South Campus will be studied providing recommendations to Monsignor.</p> <p>Planning for the St. Matthew Mercy building will commence, defining the building's purpose, evaluating the feasibility and estimating building costs.</p> <p>New ideas for emphasizing the family and building a sense of community with large and small events are expected.</p> <p>Expanded communications and a calendar of activities for lay leaders will be key to sharing the good news.</p>	<p>Continued emphasis on the family, youth/young adults, building community and sharing the good news continue in year three.</p> <p>Planning continues for the South Campus school as well as implementing other faith formation changes.</p> <p>Development of the St. Matthew Mercy Center dedicated to ecumenical outreach, community building and the future of the church continues, point to a door opening at the end of year three or in the start of the next church year.</p>



VII. Sources

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